DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 035 460 PS 002 788

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TITLE Social Studies in the Primary Grades.
INSTITUTION Pennsylvania State Dept. of Public Instruction, Harrisburg. Bureau of General and Academic Education.
PUB DATE 69
NOTE 16p.

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.90
DESCRIPTORS Anthropology, *Curriculum Guides, Economics, Geography, History, *Interdisciplinary Approach, Political Science, *Primary Grades, Social Psychology, *Social Studies, Sociology

ABSTRACT

This article seeks to provide basic information and guidelines for the teaching of social studies in kindergarten and grades 1 through 3. It emphasizes the importance of molding youth to fit into a democratic society and points out the usefulness of social studies to achieve this end. An interdisciplinary approach is advocated, which would include anthropology, sociology, economics, and social psychology as well as the traditional subjects of geography, history, and political science. A grade-by-grade outline of the content, scope, and sequence of the social studies is included, with a specific list of goals and subcommunities to be investigated. There is a discussion of teaching methods that favors a multi-text approach and concern for the individual needs of the students and the community. The unit approach to the subject matter of social studies is also advocated. The paper suggests that the social studies classroom be well-equipped with maps, audio-visual material, and reference materials. (MH)

ED035460

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# Social Studies In the Primary Grades

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This article, written by Mr. Leon Schlappich, Social Studies Adviser, is part of a series included in the Primary Packet of Materials. The packet is compiled by the Division of Early Childhood Education, Mrs. Charlotte G. Garman, Coordinator.

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To The Primary Teacher:

"Society is people, some of whom are young children. People make an impact upon society just as surely as it makes an impact on them. The unique way in which an individual relates to others around him gives him a chance to make either a constructive or a destructive contribution. Our society is highly dependent on individuals to help us move forward in our cultural development."

"This raises an important problem, for in this country young children are becoming less numerous and aging citizens more numerous in relation to the total population. On the one hand, this fact adds to the usual value of children as modifiers of the culture; each child becomes more greatly needed for the perpetuation and improvement of society. On the other hand, this same fact means that a greater share of our tax dollar must go for the comfort and welfare of those who have ceased to earn while less is left for the well being and education of children, the future earners who will advance society."

"For these reasons, we must look at society as the child sees it; we must note how the society affects his learning and growth. One thing we can be sure - the child's view of society is made up of what he carries forward out of the relationships he has selected from those available to him. Availability is determined by what the society offers and by what uniquely differing individuals are able to select and use. This is an active view of society in which selection and conversion to one's own purpose occur constantly."

What is available in our society for the child to take on and use as one of its members? We might look at four possibilities:

I. Feelings About Self and Others

"We are proud to refer to ours as a democratic society, as indeed on the whole it is. The child in our culture has a chance of growing up to feel that he counts, that he has certain rights and freedoms, and that in most instances he can count on others to treat him fairly. Because of this condition, we can depend upon our society to remain democratic."

We are also aware that not all children are guaranteed the chance to develop good feelings about themselves and others. We see these children in all of our classes.

The very nature of our society provides many situations in which positive and negative learnings about self occur.

II. Places, Things and the Social Order

"Meanings that a child acquires in relation to places, things and arrangements are so tied to feelings about people that they can only be separated while we talk about them. Home is the first society experiences by the child. The home may be a positive type of home or it may be negative depending upon the people in the home. Meanings of home may be tied to physical arrangements, but in most cases they are related to people."

"If meanings about home are positive, the child will have a fine start for building sound social values as he matures; the opposite may be the case in too many instances. The school can give the latter condition another chance through furnishing the material and conditions to institute and reinforce constructive meanings. If the school and home both fail, other community agencies sometimes help the child learn that society includes dependable as well as undependable people."

"A child develops positive meanings for things as they are related to meanings of people. He needs to be helped to experience things realistically, or he may come to look upon this world as a push button world where he can accomplish anything without effort or responsibility. The child may even conclude that he can push people about in the same way."

Children may hear adults complain about taxes as robbery. Yet, these same adults use the services provided by taxes. This could very easily cause the children to become confused about some of our common social arrangements.

Children bring with them, as they act in society, those meanings they have gained from their own particular human contacts.

III. Our Language

"Our society, like all modern societies, has words to express meanings and associated feelings. We have words which tie together the past, present, and future, and which link people in different parts of the world. Language may join people and create a cooperative spirit or it may label people and develop many negative attitudes and feelings. It is necessary that children, at an early age, learn to become selective and learn to use language that will create an harmonious interaction between individuals, groups and countries."

IV. The Approaches

"Ours is a problem solving society. Much emphasis is placed upon individual and groups to solve problems for themselves. Some children grow up in families where decisions are a family concern and they learn at an early age how to solve problems about expenditures, recreation, and work in the household. Others have to stand on their own two feet by battling with peers and winning whenever they can. The most unfortunate are those whose problems are solved by others."

"The school has the responsibility of giving children experiences in learning to solve problems, individually and collectively; to teach them to organize their feelings, meanings and language symbols for effective problem solving in a sound democratic manner." [1]

Social Studies should be challenging, exciting and rewarding. As teachers in the primary grades, upon you rests the responsibility to guide, teach, motivate and direct each individual child in the primary foundations for growth and life as a citizen in a democratic society.

## The Role of the Social Studies

The role of the social studies in primary education is to aid the child, from kindergarten through grade three to understand the concepts that describe and explain human society and to develop the insights and skills required as citizens in a democratic society.

Social studies deal with man's way of living with his fellow men in the present as well as in the past and in the future. The purpose of the social studies in the primary grades is to provide these children with learning experiences out of which will develop those understandings, attitudes, and behavior essential for effective participation in social, economic and political affairs. Such participation takes place in a series of expanding communities, beginning with the family group and moving constantly outward through the school, the local community, the commonwealth, the nation and the international community.

These experiences need to be drawn from all the fields of the social sciences. We no longer can limit these teachings to the traditional

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1 Permission to quote the above granted by National Council for Social Studies Publication; "Social Education of Young Children", Mary Willcockson, Editor

disciplines of geography, history and political science but need to include the areas of anthropology, sociology, economics and social psychology.

This all inclusive trend may make the primary teacher feel inadequate as far as knowledge in these fields is concerned. It has been shown by such programs as "Our Working World" by Laurence Senesh that economics can be taught and understood and enjoyed by pupils and teachers at the primary level, and the Anthropology Project, Education Development Center has shown that children can enjoy the study of customs, habits, attitudes and institutions of men in cultural evolution.

Teachers need not be anthropologists, economists, sociologists to teach the basic concepts and generalizations to primary children. Programs in the new social studies are designed in such a way that teachers can help children gain understanding and develop basic concepts at their level without the extensive knowledge generally associated with these disciplines.

## The Interdisciplinary Approach

Social Studies is concerned with man as involved in the past, the present and the future. It is concerned with understanding ourselves, our communities, other communities from the local community to and including the international community. Thus, we might say, social studies is a study of man and what he has chosen to do im many ways and under many influences in his local life and the various community levels.

With this picture of the social studies we can clarify the part the social science disciplines play in the social studies curriculum.

Anthropology. Primarily a study of man's behavior in primitive groups and cultures. Anthropology is part of the social studies because of the need for understanding how man's physical surroundings affect his behavior.

Economics. Economics focuses upon how people plan activities to supply the necessities of life and protect the individual and the group. Emphasis is usually centered around efficiency in producing those materials that are vital for the gratification of the basic needs of both individual and community.

Geography. Geography involves an understanding of man's interaction with the physical environment. How we adapt to physical characteristics in meeting basic needs helps us to understand ourselves and other societies.

History. History is concerned with the chronological background and growth of man. It is a means of describing, in an orderly fashion, society as it progressed in the past, exists in the present, and may move in the future. The approach may center around the influence of leaders or events or both.

Political Science. Governmental operation and social control are the main areas in the political science program. It includes means of regulating behavior of non-literate groups, as well as the government of technically advanced groups.

Psychology. Psychology deals with understanding the behavior patterns, primarily with the individual. This is not generally a basic part of the elementary program.

Sociology. This is also a study of man, but as it involves man's behavior in a civilized society. The understanding of the interactions between individuals, groups and larger communities as it affects the society as a whole.

This may seem a superficial identification of the primary disciplines in social studies and of how they are all a necessary part of the complete social studies program. It is hoped that curiosity may lead to further reading in each of the social sciences so you as a primary teacher will bring alive your teaching about man as he lives and is influenced by his surroundings, both far and near.

## The Content, Scope and Sequence of the Social Studies

Since the expanding environment or expanding geographic area plan for establishing content, scope, and sequence is predominant at the primary level, it is not surprising that the centers of interest in the primary grades are very similar from one school to another.

A typical program will best illustrate the general content, scope and sequence for the primary program.

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### Kindergarten

I. How we live and work together at school

A. Getting acquainted with our school
   1. Getting to know each other
   2. Becoming acquainted with our room

3. Learning to care for personal property and school equipment
4. Showing consideration for others
5. Getting acquainted with our school building

B. Safety at School
1. Safety in the room
2. Safety in the hall
3. Safety on the playground
4. Safety to and from school

C. Health at School
1. Good health habits
2. People who help us stay healthy

II. How we live and work together at home

A. Our family
1. Names of family members
2. How members of the family help each other
3. How a family has fun together
4. How we entertain visitors

B. Our homes
1. Types of homes
2. Why we have homes
3. Different rooms in the house
4. House members

C. Vocations of family members
1. Where fathers and mothers work
2. Workers who serve the family

D. Transportation
1. How people travel
2. How we get food and other necessities
3. People who help us in transportation

E. Communication
1. Ways of communicating with others
2. People who help us to communicate

F. Home health
1. Proper food
2. Personal care
3. Rest and exercise
4. Other people who provide for our health

G. Home safety
   1. Proper use of equipment
   2. Fire hazards
   3. People who help to keep us safe

H. Family pets
   1. Animals that make good pets in the home
   2. Outdoor pets
   3. Care of pets
   4. Types of homes
   5. Keeping pets well
   6. Handling pets
   7. How pets help us
   8. Training pets
   9. Careers connected with pets

I. Family recreation
   1. Farm
   2. Circus
   3. Zoo

J. Seasons
   1. How changes affect the family
   2. How changes affect the animals
   3. How changes affect the plants

K. Holidays
   1. Columbus Day
   2. Halloween
   3. Election Day
   4. Thanksgiving
   5. Christmas
   6. Groundhog Day
   7. Lincoln's Birthday
   8. Valentine's Day
   9. Washington's Birthday
   10. St. Patrick's Day
   11. First Day of Spring
   12. Easter
   13. Mother's Day

Grade 1

I. The Child

   A. Personal worth

B. Rights and privileges
C. Duties
D. Standards

II. The Child and His School Environment

A. American schools today
B. Schools of long ago
C. The school building
D. The school family
E. The playground
F. Work and play at school
G. Safety and health at school
H. Schools in other countries

III. The Child and His Home Environment

A. Families
1. Family groups
2. Family work
3. Family needs
4. Family recreation
5. Family happiness
6. Families in other lands

B. Homes
1. Homes in other lands
2. Early U.S. homes
3. Different kinds of homes in U.S. today
4. Workers who build homes
5. Materials used in building homes
6. Rooms and furnishings, heat and light
7. Appliances and tools used in the home
8. Climate's influence on types of homes

C. People who contribute to family living
1. At home
2. Outside the home

IV. Farm Life

A. Farm building
B. Farmer's family
C. Farm animals
D. Farm products
E. Farm machinery
F. Kinds and sizes of farms

V. Holidays to Observe

A. Columbus Day
B. Halloween
C. Thanksgiving
D. Christmas
E. Lincoln's Birthday
F. Valentine's Day
G. Washington's Birthday
H. Easter

Grade 2

I. Our Community

A. Physical features
B. Homes
C. Public buildings
D. People
E. Climate

II. Workers Who Keep Us Safe and Healthy

A. School safety patrol
B. Policeman
C. Township supervisors
D. Firemen
E. Doctor
F. Dentist
G. Nurse

III. Workers Who Produce Our Food

A. Farmer
B. Dairyman
C. Baker
D. Grocer
E. Restaurant owner
F. Food processors

IV. Clothing and Shelter

A. Factory workers
B. Sales people
C. Laundry workers
D. Shoe repairmen
E. Carpenter
F. Plumber
G. Bricklayer
H. Electrician
I. Gas man

V. Sanitation and Maintenance

A. Trash collector
B. Street cleaner
C. Street repairman

VI. Education and Recreation

A. Teacher
B. Librarian
C. Church worker
D. Life guard
E. Park and playground areas

VII. Communication and Transportation

A. Postman
B. Telephone workers
C. Bus driver
D. Taxi driver
E. Truck driver
F. Mechanic and station attendant

Grade 3

I. Conservation and Protection ✓

A. Grasslands
1. Sources of destruction
2. Methods of conservation

B. Water
1. Sources of pollution
2. Conservation measures

C. Wildlife
1. Legal protections
2. Responsibilities of farmers

D. Forests
1. Indiscriminate usage
2. Methods of conservation

E. Soil
1. Meaning and types of erosion
2. Conservation projects

F. Minerals
   1. Concepts of irreplacibility
   2. Methods of exploration
   3. Substitute products

II. Production, Distribution, Use of Goods

   A. Overview of the variety and enormity of the world of work
   B. Interdependence of various industries
   C. Relationship between urban and rural dwellers
   D. Focus on production, distribution and use of basic commodities familiar to students

III. Basic Introduction to America's Beginnings

   A. Specific explorers and frontiersmen and their deeds
   B. Overview of early America
      1. Emphasis on historic shrines, landmarks and personalities

IV. Remote or Unknown Society
(Australia, Pacific Islands, S.E. Asia, Russia)

   A. Meaning of geographic location
   B. Environmental effects on life
   C. Differing life patterns

There are many variations and ideas determined by the local district. A major trend is the use of multi-texts rather than a single basal text. This affords teachers opportunity to plan a program fitted to the needs of their students and gives children opportunity to acquire many interpretations of the same event in history or any other social study.

## The Methods of Teaching Social Studies

Despite the abuses and widespread criticism of instructional method, it remains the central element of teaching. Method consists of stimulating, guiding, directing, showing, informing and creating. Thus the act of teaching is primarily composed of method.

Accepting the fact that method is teaching, we also need to recognize that no one method will fit the needs of every child. We might go to the other extreme and say we need as many methods as we have children in the class. This may be the basis for the "Individualized Programmed Instruction" that is being explored at all levels of the educational ladder.

Method is an approach in which the teacher supplies the motivational materials to meet the individual needs of the children in her class. Motivational materials range from the basic text to audio-visual aids, original documents, resource persons and any media which will best meet the needs of the child or children in the class.

It would be remiss to conclude this section without mentioning that method is an individual thing and that each teacher must find the one that best suits her teaching style.

## Programs in Social Studies

The unit method of teaching social studies is widely used not only in Pennsylvania, but throughout the nation. This approach offers opportunity for children to gain an understanding of their environment and their relationship to it through learning experiences in large areas of the social studies.

The use of this approach offers greater opportunity to develop an interdisciplinary approach and opportunity to cut across subject matter areas.

Children are much better prepared to understand the whole, than trying to put together the small segments. The use of this program meets the needs of the individual child, since the opportunity for using multi-media is greatly increased.

The organization of a unit will vary according to the background of the children, the type of community, and the background of the teacher; so that no one unit will fit the needs of any particular teacher or any particular grade.

The unit length again is determined by the type of unit, and the range of material involved. Typically, units cover a period of from 1 to 3 weeks.

As mentioned before, there is no one way to teach a unit. The selection of materials, the approaches to be used, the subject matter to be included are a part of the individual teacher planning.

While unit teaching should not be considered the only way of teaching social studies, it is especailly useful for developing the kind of learning involved in the social studies. There is greater opportunity for children to develop the attitudes, concepts and generalizations for growing into and living as adults in a democratic society.

## The Social Studies Classroom

The social studies classroom, of necessity, should be filled with many kinds of materials. Maps, globes, audio-visual equipment, ample reference material and signs of many kinds of pupil activity. Recognizing that the primary classroom is a self-contained classroom, it might be practical to have a certain section of the room reserved for the social studies material and equipment. Good planning and organization of materials and equipment will do much to make this area functional and inviting to the children.

The key word to successful social studies teaching and classroom atmosphere is "creativity". The more creative the teacher the greater the success and pupil interest will be.

## Final Statement

This brief publication is not designed to provide all the necessary components of a successful social studies program. It is planned to promote enthusiasm for and recognition of the need for social studies and to encourage in teachers the desire to help children grow into useful citizens.

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